

Message Text

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S E C R E T BEIRUT 11845

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, US

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF USG STATEMENT ON LEBANON

REF: BIERUT 11800

1. TUENI'S SUGGESTION THAT USG MAKE STATEMENT REASSERT-
ING US SUPPORT FOR TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF THE LEBANON
(REFTEL) HAS SPED EMBASSY CONSIDERATION OF PROS AND
CONS ANY USG STATEMENT AT THIS TIME. AFTER CONSIDERAT-
ION, WE COME DOWN AGAINST ANY FORMAL STATEMENT FOR
REASONS SET FORTH BELOW. BY SAME TOKEN, BELIEVE THAT
IF QUESTIONED IN PRESS BRIEFING SPOKESMAN SHOULD BE AS
EVASIVE AS POSSIBLE.

2. OPTION A. STATEMENT SUPPORTING TERRITORIAL
INTEGRITY OF LEBANON.

PROS: SUCH STATEMENT WOULD WARN ISRAELIS AND
SYRIANS.

CONS:

1. STATEMENT WOULD ENCOURAGE CHRISTIAN STUB-
BORNESS AND BRINKSMANSHIP.

2. STATEMENT WOULD BE INTERPRETED AS A THREAT
BY THE SYRIANS AND LEBANESE MOSLEM EXTREMISTS.

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3. LEBANESE SITUATION SO MURKY THAT I CANNOT EXCLUDE POSSIBILITY THAT TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY MIGHT BE VIOLATED OR AT LEAST APPEAR TO BE VIOLATED IN CHRISTIAN EYES. WE WANT AVOID ANOTHER 1958 AT ALL COSTS.

3. OPTION B. STATEMENT ASSERTING USG WOULD NOT INTER-
VENE IN LEBANON.

PROS:

1. SUCH STATEMENT WOULD UNDERCUT CHRISTIAN OVER-CONFIDENCE SOMEWHAT, A DEVELOPMENT WE WOULD VIEW AS BENEFICIAL (SEE BELOW).

2. STATEMENT WOULD GIVE MORAL SUPPORT TO MODERATE MOSLEMS AND CURRENT MODERATE SYRIAN BEHAVIOR.

CONS:

1. SUCH STATEMENT LIMITS FUTURE USG OPTIONS BOTH IN REALITY AND AS PERCEIVED BY SYRIANS AND MOSLEMS HERE, THUS REMOVING A FACTOR PROBABLY WORKING FOR LEFT WING MODERATION IN THE LEBANON.

2. STATEMENT IN ITSELF IS NOT LIKELY TO BE VERY EFFECTIVE.

3. "INTERVENTION" OR ANYTHING THAT SMACKS OF IT, MUST BE AVOIDED IN ANY MIDDLE EASTERN CONTEXT.

4. ABOVE BASED ON SEVERAL GENERAL OBSERVATIONS RE PRESENT SITUATION. NAMELY:

1. CHRISTIAN RIGHT WING ACTIVISM BEARS MORE THAN 50 PERCENT OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR ROUND 4. CHRISTIAN MASSACRE OF 12 INNOCENT MOSLEMS IN ZGHORTA SET OFF SERIOUS FIGHTING WITH TRIPOLI MOSLEMS. SIMILARLY, PHALANGE STATEMENT THAT IT WOULD TAKE MATTERS INTO ITS OWN HANDS IF ARMY DID NOT FORMALLY INTERVENE IN BEIRUT ON SEPTEMBER 17 WAS TAKEN SERIOUSLY BY ALL SIDES AND LED TO SUDDEN

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ESCALATION OF FIGHTING THAT NIGHT AND FOLLOWING DAY. WE BELIEVE CHRISTIANS MUST COME TO RECOGNIZE THAT WHAT-EVER THEIR TACTICAL VICTORIES ON THE GROUND MIGHT BE, EACH SUCCEEDING ROUND OF FIGHTING ERODES THEIR STRATEGIC POSITION. CHRISTIANS MUST TURN TO NEGOTIATIONS RATHER THAN WARFARE.

2. LONGER-RUN CAUSE OF TROUBLE IS CHALLENGE TO

CHRISTIAN SUPREMACY BY COMBINATION OF MODERATE MOSLEMS AND LEFT WINGERS. THESE DISPARATE GROUPS WORK TOGETHER AS LONG AS RIGHT WING CHRISTIAN ESTABLISHMENT MAINTAINS ITS OBSTINACY AND RESISTS MAKING CONCESSIONS TO MODERATE MOSLEMS WHICH WOULD CO-OPT THEM TO THEIR SIDE AGAINST LEFT WING EXTREMISTS.

3. SYRIANS AND MAIN LINE PALESTINIANS ARE PLAYING MODERATE ROLE MAINLY (WE JUDGE) BECAUSE OF THE INTERNATIONAL LINE-UP OF FORCES. THIS INCLUDES ACUTE CONSCIOUSNESS OF POSSIBLE ISRAELI INTERVENTION AS WELL AS RESIDUAL FEAR OF USG REACTION, BOTH DIPLOMATIC AND, IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, MILITARY. THIS VIEW WOULD CONSIDER IT IRRELEVANT WHETHER USG REACTION TOOK FORM OF "UNLEASHING" ISRAELIS OR RESORTED TO MORE DIRECT INTERVENTION IN RESPONSE TO HEAVY PRESSURES FROM ISRAEL AND ITS SUPPORTERS IN THE U.S.

4. THUS SPECTER OF US INTERVENTION PLAYS BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ROLE IN PRESENT SITUATION. IT TENDS TO MODERATE THE DEMANDS OF THE MOSLEM LEFT BUT ALSO ENCOURAGES THE CHRISTIAN EXTREMISTS. PUBLIC STATEMENTS CANNOT SIGNIFICANTLY MODIFY THIS SPECTER.
GODLEY

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